

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Plaintiff/Respondent,

v.

RIGOBERTO BAEZ RIVERA (3),
Defendant/Petitioner.

NO. CR-05-2075-EFS-3
(NO. CV-09-3105-EFS)

**ORDER GRANTING MR. RIVERA'S
MOTION FOR EXCESS PAGES BUT
DENYING MOTION UNDER 28 U.S.C.
§ 2255 TO VACATE SENTENCE**

BEFORE THE COURT are Petitioner Rigoberto Baez Rivera's Motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set Aside, or Correct Sentence by a Person in Federal Custody (Ct. Rec. [1728](#)), Motion to File Excess Pages (Ct. Rec. [1724](#)), and Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (Ct. Rec. [1726](#)). Mr. Rivera challenges the leader/organizer role-in-the-offense sentencing enhancement by arguing that the Government breached the plea agreement by seeking the enhancement, the Court failed to support the enhancement with specific findings, and defense counsel failed to object to and appeal the application of the enhancement. Mr. Rivera also argues that he was prejudiced by defense counsels' failure to present a staleness challenge to the affidavits submitted in support of the wiretap search warrants.

1 **A. Background**

2 On March 7, 2006, Mr. Rivera pled guilty to conspiracy to distribute
3 more than 500 grams of a mixture or substance containing a detectible
4 amount of methamphetamine in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 846. (Ct. Rec.
5 [1092](#).) The Court sentenced Mr. Rivera on August 21, 2006, to 168 months
6 imprisonment and 5 years supervised release. (Ct. Rec. [1429](#).) Mr.
7 Rivera's direct appeal was denied (Ct. Rec. [1697](#)).

8 **B. Preliminary Motions**

9 The Court finds good cause to grant Mr. Rivera's Motion to File
10 Excess Pages (Ct. Rec. [1724](#)). The Court denies as moot Mr. Rivera's
11 Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (Ct. Rec. [1726](#)) because he was
12 granted in forma pauperis status during the underlying criminal
13 proceeding.

14 **C. Review Standard**

15 Pursuant to Rule 4(b) of the Rules Governing Section 2255
16 Proceedings for the United States District Courts, the Court must examine
17 a § 2255 motion and the record to determine whether summary dismissal is
18 warranted. Rule 4(b), 28 U.S.C. foll. § 2255. "If it plainly appears
19 from the face of the motion and any annexed exhibits and the prior
20 proceedings in the case that the movant is not entitled to relief in the
21 district court, the judge shall make an order for its summary dismissal."
22 *Id.*; see also *Baumann v. United States*, 692 F.2d 565, 571 (9th Cir.
23 1982).

24 **C. Analysis**

25 Viewing the record under this standard, the Court denies Mr. Rivera
26 habeas relief. Mr. Rivera is plainly not entitled to relief on his first

1 and second claims relating to the leader/organizer sentencing
2 enhancement. First, the parties did not agree that the Government could
3 not seek a role-in-the-offense sentencing enhancement. Rather, the Plea
4 Agreement stated, "The Defendant understands that the government will be
5 recommending a *three level enhancement* as a *leader and organizer* of a
6 criminal activity that involved five or more participants, pursuant to
7 USSG § 3B1.1(a)." (Ct. Rec. [1092](#) (emphasis added.)) This provision is
8 ambiguous because a three-level enhancement applies to a manager/
9 supervisor whereas a leader/organizer receives a four-level enhancement.
10 Notwithstanding this ambiguity, it is clear that the Government was free
11 to seek an "aggravating" role-in-the-offense enhancement. Therefore, the
12 Government did not breach the Plea Agreement by presenting evidence at
13 the sentencing hearing to support an "aggravating role" sentencing
14 enhancement. It was within this Court's sentencing discretion, after
15 considering the presented evidence, to determine what aggravating-role
16 enhancement to apply; the Court was not bound by the Plea Agreement.
17 Second, Defendant already challenged the Court's four-level
18 organizer/leader sentencing enhancement on direct appeal. The Ninth
19 Circuit affirmed the district court's application of this enhancement,
20 finding sufficient facts to support the enhancement. Lastly, because Mr.
21 Rivera's "aggravating role" sentencing-enhancement challenge is
22 meritless, he cannot now argue on collateral review that counsel provided
23 ineffective assistance in connection with this issue. *See United States*
24 *v. Redd*, 225 F.3d 664, 701 (9th Cir. 2000).

25 Mr. Rivera's final habeas claim is that counsel provided ineffective
26 assistance by failing to argue that the information contained within

1 Agent John Schrock's affidavits submitted to obtain wiretap warrants was
2 stale.¹ An affidavit contains stale information if it fails to contain
3 facts "'so closely related to the time of the issue of the warrant as to
4 justify a finding of probable cause at that time.'" *Durham v. United*
5 *States*, 403 F.2d 190, 193 (9th Cir. 1968). Agent Schrock signed an
6 affidavit on March 14, 2005, to support the issuance of a wiretap
7 application on two cell phones, one of which was subscribed to and
8 operated by Rigoberto Rivera (Ct. Rec. 710-4 p. 52); a district court
9 judge authorized wiretapping these two telephones later that day.² This
10 affidavit details, in part, a) 1996 and 1998 traffic stops of Mr.
11 Rivera's vehicle during which a significant amount of cash, a drug
12 ledger, and/or drugs were found and b) searches conducted in August 1999
13 and October 2002 of a co-Defendant's residence during which drugs, a
14 significant amount of cash, and firearms were seized. Mr. Rivera argues
15 this information is too old to consider in a 2005 search warrant

16
17 ¹ The legal authority for Mr. Rivera's stale-affidavit claim is
18 found in co-Defendant Gilberto Baez Rivera's habeas memorandum (Ct. Rec.
19 [1736](#)).

20 ² In April 2005, Agent Schrock sought and obtained wiretaps for
21 three other telephones, two of which were subscribed to and used by
22 Rigoberto Rivera. Because the information contained in these two
23 subsequent affidavits was substantially similar to the March 14, 2005
24 affidavit, absent the recently-obtained investigative information, the
25 Court analyzes Mr. Rivera's staleness argument only as it relates to the
26 initial March 14, 2005 affidavit.

1 application and highlights that neither drug possession nor drug
2 trafficking convictions were obtained based on this evidence.

3 The Affidavit, however, discusses at great length the results of the
4 federal investigation that began in August 2003 of the Rivera drug
5 trafficking organization. This federal investigation included pen
6 registers, confidential sources, sources of information, arranged drug
7 purchases, physical surveillance, use of an undercover agent, and trash
8 runs. Agent Schrock's affidavit details the results of this
9 investigation. In pertinent part, the affidavit includes the following
10 information about Mr. Rivera:

- 11 • "In July 2003, [a confidential source] provided information
12 regarding the RIVERA drug trafficking organization [The
13 confidential source] identified SABINO as "the brains" behind
14 the organization, that GILBERTO was "in-charge" and that
15 RIGOBERTO was a cocaine user. [The confidential source] stated
16 that on one occasion between one and two years prior to July
2003, [the confidential source], GILBERTO and RIGOBERTO went
into a backroom at the Besame Mucho Bar and Grill where they
showed [the confidential source] a kilogram of cocaine. [The
confidential source] stated that the RIVERA's had additional
cocaine to distribute." (Ct. Rec. 710-4: Affidavit p. 13.)
- 17 • "[T]he sequence of events [since November 2004] pertaining to
18 the most recent of those four controlled buys, and an analysis
19 of pen register information of TARGET TELEPHONE 1 during the
20 time frame of that transaction, reveals that RIGOBERTO was
involved in the cocaine transaction and that he utilizes TARGET
TELEPHONE 2 to coordinate his narcotics-related activities." *Id.* p. 9.
- 21 • On January 27, 2005, Rigoberto Rivera was observed conducting
22 "'heat check' counter-surveillance." *Id.* pp. 24 & 25.
- 23 • On January 27, 2005, " . . . GERARDO contacted RIGOBERTO at
24 RIGOBERTO's TARGET TELEPHONE 2 to further coordinate the
[cocaine] transaction. . . . [T]he cocaine was likely being
25 stored at GILBERTO's residence and that GERARDO, GILBERTO, and
RIGOBERTO met at GILBERTO's residence to further coordinate and
process the transaction." *Id.* p. 25.

1 After reviewing the affidavit in its totality, the Court finds Mr. Rivera
2 cannot succeed on a staleness argument. Because the Affidavit detailed
3 "the existence of a widespread, firmly entrenched, and ongoing narcotics
4 operation" and identified Mr. Rivera's role in such, the Court concludes
5 that the record conclusively shows that Mr. Rivera will not succeed on
6 his Fourth Amendment staleness argument. Likewise, the Court determines
7 that defense counsels' decision to not present a staleness argument
8 either pretrial or on appeal was objectively reasonable. *See Strickland*
9 *v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 687-88 (1984) ("When a convicted defendant
10 complains of ineffectiveness of counsel's assistance, the defendant must
11 show that counsel's representation fell below an objective standard of
12 reasonableness.")

13 For the above-given reasons, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:**

14 1. Mr. Rivera's Motion to File Excess Pages (Ct. Rec. [1724](#)) is
15 **GRANTED.**

16 2. Mr. Rivera's Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (Ct. Rec.
17 [1726](#)) is **DENIED AS MOOT.**

18 3. Mr. Rivera's Motion under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to Vacate, Set
19 Aside, or Correct Sentence by a Person in Federal Custody (Ct. Rec. [1728](#))
20 is **DENIED.**

21 4. The Court **DECLINES** to issue a certificate of appealability.

22 5. The related civil case file is to be **CLOSED.**

23 **IT IS SO ORDERED.** The District Court Executive is directed to

24 A. Enter this Order; and

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26 ///

1 B. Provide a copy of this Order to counsel and Mr. Rivera at the
2 following address:

3 Rigoberto Baez Rivera
4 Reg. # 16254-085
5 F.C.I. Sheridan
6 P. O. Box 5000
7 Sheridan, OR 97378.

8 **DATED** this 1st day of March 2010.

9 S/ Edward F. Shea
10 EDWARD F. SHEA
11 United States District Judge

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